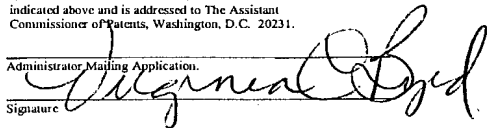
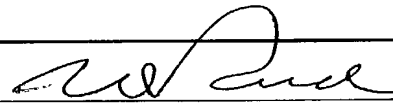


FORM PTO-1390 OFFICE (REV. 10-95)		U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK	ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER
TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US) CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371			CM2415M U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5) <b>10/089353</b>
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/US00/27300	INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE 04 October 2000	PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED 05 October 1999	
TITLE OF INVENTION Elastic Article			
APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US MCGOFF, Matthew Grady et al.			
Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information.			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) at any time rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(l).</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Application was filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> has been transmitted by the International Bureau.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).</li> </ol> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> have been transmitted by the International Bureau.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have not been made and will not be made.</li> </ol> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).</li> </ol>			
Items 11. to 16. below concern document(s) or information included:			
11. <input type="checkbox"/> An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.			
12. <input type="checkbox"/> An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.			
13. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A FIRST preliminary amendment. <input type="checkbox"/> A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment.			
14. <input type="checkbox"/> A substitute specification.			
15. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.			
16. <input type="checkbox"/> Other items or information:			
"Express Mail" mailing label number <b>EL483621598715</b>			
Date of Deposit <b>27 March 2002</b>			
I hereby certify that this paper/fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to The Assistant Commissioner of Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.			
Administrator Mailing Application. Signature 			

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5) <b>10/089353</b>		INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/US00/27300		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER CM2415M	
				CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY	
ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =				\$740	
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than     20     30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).				\$0	
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE		
Total Claims	16-20=	0	x \$18.00	\$0	
Independent Claims	2-3=	0	x \$84.00	\$0	
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)			\$280.00	\$0	
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =				\$740	
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than     20     30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).				\$0	
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =				\$740	
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28,3.31). \$40.00 per property +				\$0	
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =				\$740	
				Amount to be refunded	s
				charged	s
<p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of \$ ____ to cover the above fees is enclosed.</p> <p>b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. <u>16-2480</u> in the amount of \$ <u>740</u> to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.</p> <p>c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. <u>16-2480</u>. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.</p> <p>NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.</p> <p>SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:</p>					
F. Taffy, Patent Attorney Customer Number 27752			 Signature <u>T. David Reed</u> Name <u>32.931</u> Registration Number		

Case CM2415M

## IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In the Matter of:

U.S. National Phase Entry  
Under 35 USC § 371 from  
the International Application of :  
**Matthew Grady McGoff, et al.** :  
Int'l Appln No. PCT/US00/27300 :  
Int'l Filing Date of 04 October 2000 :  
Entitled: ELASTIC ARTICLE

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT UNDER 37 CFR § 1.112**

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231  
Dear Sir:

Prior to Examination and computation of the fees for entering the captioned International Application into the U.S. National Phase, please preliminarily amend the above-identified application as follows and consider the following Remarks.

**AMENDMENTS****IN THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel Claims 1 to 15 and insert therefor new Claims 16 to 31 as follows.

16. An elastic article comprising
- an active ingredient; and
  - a foam matrix formed from at least one polymeric material and a plasticiser;  
and
  - a stabilizing agent;
- wherein said article is adapted to deliver said active ingredient to an aqueous environment.

17. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said active ingredient is active in an aqueous environment and wherein said article is water-dispersible, water-disintegrating or water-soluble.
18. The elastic article according to claim 16 wherein said matrix comprises a glass transition temperature (Tg) of below about 50°C.
19. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said matrix comprises an elastic modulus of less than about 1 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>.
20. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said stabilizing agent comprises a foam stabilizing agent.
21. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said active ingredient is selected from the group consisting of: cleaning product ingredient, fabric care ingredient, pharmaceutical ingredient, cosmetic ingredient, enzyme, surfactant, brightener, dye, suds suppressor, bleach, bleach activator, fabric softener, fabric conditioner, antibacterial agent, effervescence system and mixtures thereof.
22. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said active ingredient comprises an enzyme and wherein said stabilizing agent comprising an enzyme stabilizing agent.
23. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said polymeric material comprises a water-soluble polymer.
24. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said article is in the form of a particle having a volume mean particle size of from about 50 to about 4000 microns.
25. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said article comprises a relative density of from about 0.05 to about 0.9.
26. The elastic article according to claim 16, wherein said matrix forms a series of closed and open cells, wherein the ratio of closed cells to open cells is at least 1 to 1.
27. A process for producing an elastic article, said process comprising the steps of
  - a. obtaining a mixture of a polymeric material and a plasticiser;
  - b. chemically or physically introducing a gas into said mixture;

28. The process according to claim 27, wherein said active ingredient is contacted with said stabilizing agent prior to said active ingredient being contacted with said mixture of polymeric material and plasticiser.

30. A method of using the elastic article of claim 16, said method comprising the step of incorporating said elastic article into a composition selected from the group consisting of: cleaning composition, fabric care composition, personal care composition, cosmetic composition, pharmaceutical composition and mixtures thereof.

31. The method according to claim 30, wherein an active ingredient is incorporated into the composition, said active ingredient selected from the group consisting of: enzymes, perfumes, surfactants, brighteners, dyes, suds suppressors, bleaches, bleach activators, fabric softeners, antibacterial agents, effervescing systems and mixtures thereof.

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1041 1042 1043 1044 10

Respectfully submitted,

By

*W. J. R. R.*

Case CM2415M- Preliminary Amendment

## ELASTIC ARTICLE

### Technical field of the invention

5

The present invention relates to elastic articles, typically particles, comprising a matrix formed from a polymeric material and a plasticiser, a stabilising agent and an active ingredient, such as a detergent active ingredient, typically to be delivered to an aqueous environment.

10

### Background to the invention

15

Compositions such as cleaning products and personal care products, cosmetic products and pharmaceutical products, often comprise active ingredients which are to be delivered to water or which are required to be active in an aqueous environment. Many of these active ingredients are sensitive to moisture, temperature changes, light and/or air during storage.

20

Another problem with many of these active ingredients, in particular enzymes, is that they tend to form dust due to physical forces directed upon them during handling. This not only creates waste product, but the dust can also cause hygiene and health problems.

25

Attempts to overcome these problems have led to the development of protecting these active ingredients by coating agents or encapsulating agents. The problem with many of these coated particles is that they do not always exhibit sufficient impact resistance during handling, and when acted upon by physical forces typically encountered during handling, dust is formed which can cause hygiene and health problems.

30

The Inventors have found an improved method of protecting active ingredients and delivering these active ingredients to aqueous environments. They have found that specific elastic articles comprising a foam matrix formed from a polymeric material and a

plasticiser, are very impact robust and the active ingredient which is incorporated therein is protected against physical forces acting upon said elastic article. Furthermore, the Inventors have found that when a stabilising agent is also incorporated in the elastic article, the active ingredient is further protected against air, moisture and chemical reactions which may cause the active ingredient to degrade.

Thus, the elastic article of the present invention is very impact resistant, thus resulting in reduced breaking-up or abrasion during handling and reduced dust formation, and the active ingredient incorporated therein is protected from air, moisture or chemical reactions and remains stable in said article during storage. For example, elastic articles, such as particles or beads, comprising enzymes can be obtained which are safer and more efficient to handle and use. Moreover, these articles can be made such that they deliver the active ingredients incorporated therein, such as enzymes, very efficiently to an aqueous environment. Typically, the article of the present invention is in the form of a foam article which is air-stable under normal humidity storage conditions, but unstable upon contact with water, to thus deliver the active ingredient. The elastic article is useful in any product, especially useful in cleaning products, pharmaceutical products, personal care products, cosmetic products and fabric care products.

#### Summary of the invention

The present invention provides an elastic article comprising;

- a) an active ingredient; and
  - b) a foam matrix formed from a polymeric material and a plasticiser; and
  - c) a stabilising agent;
- whereby said article is capable of delivering said active ingredient to a liquid environment.

The elastic article herein preferably comprises a foam matrix which has a glass transition temperature ( $T_g$ ) of below 50°C, preferably below 40°C.





d) prior to step c) and/or simultaneous with step c) and /or subsequent to step c),  
 contacting a stabilising agent to said mixture; and  
 e) shaping the articles of the resulting mixture;  
 whereby preferably one or more steps a) to e) are followed or accompanied by the  
 5 removal of part of the water, if present.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the use of an elastic article is provided,  
 to deliver active ingredients to an aqueous environment, preferably the active ingredients  
 being detergent active ingredients, preferably enzymes, and the aqueous environment  
 10 being the wash water.

#### Detailed description of the invention

##### Elastic article

15

The elastic article of the present invention, herein referred to as "article", comprises an  
 active ingredient, a matrix and a stabilising agent. Said active ingredient, matrix and  
 stabilising agent are described in more detail hereinafter.

20

Said article herein is preferably water-dispersible, water-disintegrating or water-soluble.  
 Preferred water-dispersible articles herein have a dispersibility of at least 50%,  
 preferably at least 75% or even at least 95%, as measured by the method set out  
 hereinafter using a glass-filter with a maximum pore size of 50 microns; more preferably  
 the article herein is water-soluble or water-disintegrating and has a solubility or  
 25 disintegration of at least 50%, preferably at least 75% or even at least 95%, as measured  
 by the method set out hereinafter using a glass-filter with a maximum pore size of 20  
 microns, namely:

Gravimetric method for determining water-solubility, water-disintegration or water-  
 30 dispersibility of the article herein:

50 grams  $\pm$  0.1 gram of the article herein is added in a 400 ml beaker, whereof the weight has been determined, and 245ml  $\pm$  1ml of distilled water is added. This is stirred vigorously on magnetic stirrer set at 600 rpm, for 30 minutes. Then, the article-mixture is filtered through a folded qualitative sintered-glass filter with the pore sizes as defined above (max. 20 or 50 microns). The water is dried off from the collected filtrate by any conventional method, and the weight of the remaining article fraction is determined (which is the dissolved, disintegrated or dispersed fraction). Then, the % solubility, disintegration or dispersibility can be calculated.

The article herein is typically used to deliver actives to aqueous environment. Then, the article herein, and preferably the matrix thereof, is preferably unstable when brought into contact with water. This occurs such that the active ingredient(s) or part thereof, present in the article is delivered to a liquid, preferably an aqueous environment such as water. Preferably the article or part thereof denatures, disintegrates, preferably disperses or dissolves in liquid, preferably in an aqueous environment, more preferably in water. It may be preferred that the active ingredient is delivered rapidly to water and that the elastic is such that it disperses or dissolves rapidly; preferably at least 10% of the article, by weight, is dissolved or dispersed in 30 minutes after contacting said article with water, or more preferably at least 30% or even at least 50% or even at least 70% or even at least 90% (introduced in the water at a 1% by weight concentration). It may even be preferred that this happens within 20 minutes or even 10 minutes or even 5 minutes after contacting the article with the water. The dissolution or dispersion can be measured by the method described hereinbefore for measuring the dissolution, disintegration and dispersion of the article herein.

Preferably the elastic article is such that the total volume of the article is changed, preferably reduced, with at least 10%, compared to the initial total volume, as for example can be determined when 1 cm<sup>3</sup> of the article is added to 100 ml of demineralised water upon and stirred for 5 minutes at a speed of 200rpm, at a temperature of 25°C.

Preferably the change, or preferably reduction, in total volume is at least 20% or even at least 40% or even at least 60% or even at least 90% or even about 100%, e.g. because it

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may be preferred that substantially the whole article is disintegrated, dispersed or preferably dissolved into the water quickly.

This can be measured by use of any method known in the art, in particular herein with a method as follows (double immersion technique):

1 cm<sup>3</sup> of an elastic article is obtained and introduced in a 100 ml micro volumetric measuring cylinder which is filled with 50 ml ± 0.1 ml of an organic inert solvent.

Acetone is for example used when found to be neither denaturing and/or not interacting with the polymeric material in the matrix of the elastic article herein, for example when this is PVA. Other neutral organic medium can be used according to the nature of the article under investigation; the inert solvent is such that the article is substantially not dissolved, dispersed, disintegrated or denatured by the solvent.

The cylinder is air sealed and left to rest for 1 minute so that the solvent penetrates the whole elastic article. The change in volume is measured and taken as the original volume V<sub>i</sub> of the foam specimen. The article is then removed from the solvent and left to dry in air so that the solvent evaporates.

The article is then placed in a 250 ml beaker containing 100 ml of demineralised water, maintained at 25°C, under stirring at 200 rpm with the help of a magnetic stirrer, for 5 minutes. The remaining of the article specimen, if any, is filtered off with a 60mm mesh copper filter and placed in an oven at a temperature and for a period such that residual water is removed. The dried remaining article is re-introduced in the measuring cylinder which volume of acetone had been re-adjusted to 50 ml.

The increase in total volume is monitored and taken as the final volume of the elastic article V<sub>f</sub>. The decrease in total volume ΔV of the elastic article specimen is then:

$$\% \Delta V = \frac{V_f}{V_i} * 100$$

The elastic article preferably has a relative density ρ\* of from 0.01 to 0.95, more preferably from 0.05 to 0.9 or even from 0.1 to 0.8 or even from 0.3 to 0.7. The relative

The preferred foamed article as used herein is typically air-stable or stable upon contact with air, which means herein that the bulk volume of the article or matrix thereof substantially remains the same when exposed to air. This means in particular that the article retains preferably from 75% to 125% or even from 90% to 110% or even from 95% to 100% of its bulk volume when stored in an open beaker (9 cm diameter; without any protective barrier) in a incubator under controlled ambient conditions (humidity = RH 60%, temperature = 25°C ) for 24 hours. Preferably the elastic article retains from 75% to 125% or even from 90% to 110% or even from 95% to 100% of its bulk volume under the above storage conditions whereby the humidity is 80%.

The bulk volume change can be measured by any conventional method. In particular useful is a digital image recorder system containing a digital camera coupled to a personal computer itself equipped with calibrated image analyser software. A 1 cm<sup>3</sup> specimen of the article is obtained and introduced in an open beaker having a diameter of 9 cm and stored for 24 hours at the above conditions. After 24 hours, the size in all three dimensions is measured with the image analysis recorder system. Each specimen measurement is repeated three times, and the average bulk volume change is calculated in %.

Preferably, the elastic article is such that, when in the form of particles of a mean particle size of 2000 microns or less, these particles also retain from 75% to 125% or even from 90% to 110% or even from 95% to 100% of their bulk volume. This can for example be measured by placing 20 grams of such particles, or a weight comprising more than 500 particles, in a volumetric beaker having a diameter of 9 cm. The beaker is taped lightly on its base until the elastic particles re-arrange themselves in a stable position with a horizontal top surface. The volume is measured. The open beaker with the elastic particles is then carefully placed in the incubator for 24 hours, set to the desired %RH and

temperature. The bulk volume after the 24 hours is measured and the change of bulk volume is calculated in %.

5 The elastic article comprises (by weight) preferably at least 1% active ingredient(s), more preferably from 5% to 70%, more preferably at least 10% by weight of the article, more preferably from 15% or even 20% or even 25% to 50%.

10 The elastic article comprises (by weight) preferably from 10% to 99% matrix, more preferably at least 20% or even 30% to 99%, more preferably from 20% or 30% to 90% to 80%.

15 The elastic article comprises ( by weight) at least 1% stabilising agent, more preferably from 5%, or from 10%, or from 15%, or from 20%, and to 50%, or to 40%, or to 30%, or to 25%.

#### Matrix

20 The matrix of the elastic article of the present invention, herein referred to as "matrix", is formed from a polymeric material and a plasticiser. Said polymeric material and said plasticiser are described in more detail hereinafter.

25 The ratio of plasticiser to polymeric material in the matrix is preferably 1 to 100, more preferably 1 to 70 or 1 to 50, more preferably 1 to 30 or even 1 to 20, depending on the type of plasticiser and polymeric material used. For example, when the polymeric material comprises PVA and the plasticiser comprises glycerine or glycerol derivatives and optionally water, the ratio is preferably around 1:15 to 1:8, a preferred ratio being around 10:1.

30 The matrix herein may further comprise the active ingredient of the article herein and/or the stabilising agent of the article herein. Said active ingredient and said stabilising agent are described in more detail hereinafter. Cross-linking agents may also be added to

modify the properties of the matrix or the resulting article as appropriate. Borate may be useful in the matrix herein.

The matrix herein has a glass transition temperature ( $T_g$ ) of below  $50^{\circ}\text{C}$ , preferably  
5 below  $40^{\circ}\text{C}$ , preferably less than  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$  or even less than  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$  or even less than  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  
Preferably the matrix herein has a  $T_g$  of above  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  or even above  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

The  $T_g$  of the matrix when used herein, is the  $T_g$  of the matrix as present in the article,  
which thus may be a mixture of polymeric material and plasticiser alone, or a mixture of  
10 polymeric material, plasticiser, active ingredient and/or stabilising agent, and in any case,  
optional additional ingredients may be present (such as, densification aids, fillers,  
lubricants etc., as described hereinafter).

The  $T_g$  as used herein is as defined in the text book 'Dynamic Mechanical Analysis'  
15 (page 53, figure 3.11c on page 57), as being the temperature of a material (matrix) where  
the material (matrix) changes from glassy to rubbery, namely where chains gain enough  
mobility to slide by each other.

The  $T_g$  of the matrix of the article of the invention can be measured in the Perkin-Elmer  
20 DMA 7e equipment, following the directions in operations manual for this equipment,  
generating a curve as illustrated in the book Dynamic Mechanical Analysis - page 57,  
figure 3-11c. The  $T_g$  is the temperature or log Frequency as measured with this  
equipment, between the glass and 'leathery region', as defined in that text.

25 The matrix, and preferably the elastic article as a whole, has a specific elasticity and  
flexibility, because of its specific glass transition temperature. In particular, this means  
that the matrix and the article reversibly deform, absorbing the energy of impacts or of  
forces so that the article or matrix remains substantially its original bulk volume after the  
physical force ceases to be applied on the component.

30

The elasticity can be defined by the elastic modulus of the matrix, or even the article, which again can be defined by the Young's modulus. This can be calculated from strain or stress mechanical tests as known in the art, for example by using Perkin-Elmer DMA 7e equipment following the manufacturer's experimental procedure over a specific % static strain range, namely in the range of 10-40% static strain. This represents a maximum strain as could be applicable during normal manufacturing or handling. Thus, the elastic modulus as defined herein is the maximum modulus as measured with this equipment in the range of 10% to 40% static strain. For example a piece of matrix (or article) of 1 cm<sup>3</sup> can be used in the testing with this equipment.

The matrix herein typically has an elastic modulus or Young's modulus of less than 4 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, or typically less than 2 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, even more preferentially less than 1 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, but typically even less than 0.5 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, or even less than 0.1 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, or even less than 0.01 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, as measured with the Perkin-Elmer DMA 7e equipment. In particular a matrix herein which contains gas bubbles, e.g. formed by processes involving the introduction of air in the matrix, has an elastic modulus below 0.1 GN.m<sup>-2</sup> or even 0.01 GN.m<sup>-2</sup> or even below 0.005 GN.m<sup>-2</sup> or even below 0.0001 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>.

Preferably the matrix is flexible, such that it has a relative yield strain greater than 2%, and preferably greater than 15% or even greater than 50%, as measured with the Perkin-Elmer DMA 7e equipment. (The yield strain is, in this measurement, the limit of strain at which a piece of matrix deforms irreversible).

In particular this means that when a matrix sample having a cross section of a specific length, for example 1cm, is compressed with a static force applied along the axis of that cross section, the static force being variable but at least equivalent to twice atmospheric pressure, the change of this length after removal of the force is at least 90% to 110% of the original length. This can for example be measured by use of Perkin-Elmer DMA 7e equipment.



Similarly, the matrix is preferably flexible to such an extent that when a matrix sample having a cross section of a specific length, for example 1 cm, is stretched with a static force applied along the axis of that cross section, the static force being variable, but at least equivalent to twice atmospheric pressure, the change of this length after removal of the force is at least 90% to 110% of the original length. This can for example be measured by use of Perkin-Elmer DMA 7e equipment.

In particular, when using this equipment, the static forces applied along the axis of a cross section of a 1 cm<sup>3</sup> matrix sample are gradually increased until the deformation of the component, in the direction of the cross section, is 70%. Then, the force is removed and the final deformation of the matrix sample in the direction of the cross section is measured. Preferably, this length of the cross section after this experiment is preferably from 90% to 110% of the original length of the cross section, preferably from 95% to 105% or even from 98% to 100%.

The elastic modulus or Young's modulus is related to the relative density, namely

$$\frac{E^*}{E_s} \approx \left( \frac{\rho^*}{\rho_s} \right)^2,$$

where  $\rho^*$  is the relative density of the matrix or even the article, and  $\rho_s$  is the relative densities of the components of the matrix or article, as described herein, and  $E^*$  is the Young's modulus of the matrix or even the elastic article itself, and  $E_s$  that of the components of the matrix or even the article. This means that even a stiff polymeric material, with a high  $E_s$  can be made into an elastic, flexible matrix by adjusting the levels and/ or type of plasticiser and optionally by modifying the density (or for example by introducing gas during the making process to form elastic foam articles, as described below).

The matrix, or even the article as a whole, is preferably in the form of a foam and preferably such that it forms an interconnected network of open and/ or closed cells, in particular a network of solid struts or plates which form the edges and faces of open and/

or closed cells. The spacing inside the cells can contain part of the active ingredient and/or a gas, such as air.

Preferably, the ratio of the closed cells to open cells in the matrix of the article, or the article as a whole is more than 1:1, preferably more than 3:2 or even more than 2:1 or even more than 3:1. This ratio can be determined by calculating the Total Volume of a specimen of the matrix or article,  $V_T$ , (assuming a spherical shape), and then measuring with a Mercury Porosimetry Test method the Open Cell Volume ( $V_O$ ) and subtracting the Open Cell Volume from the Total Volume should deliver the Closed Cell Volume ( $V_C$ :  
 $V_T = V_O + V_C$ ).

#### Polymeric material

Any polymeric material can be used to form the matrix herein, provided it has itself a  $T_g$  as defined above or more typically, it can be formed into a matrix having the  $T_g$  as defined above by using a suitable amount of plasticiser.

Preferably, the polymer material comprises or consists of amorphous polymer(s).

The polymeric material may consist of a single type of homologous polymer or may be a mixture of polymers. Mixtures of polymers may in particular be beneficial to control the mechanical and/or dissolution properties of the elastic article, depending on the application thereof and the requirements thereof.

Preferred it that the polymeric material comprises a water-dispersible or more preferably a water-soluble polymer. Water-dispersible and water-soluble are typically defined as described hereinbefore, as per the method for determining the water-solubility and water-dispersibility of the article herein. Preferred water-dispersible polymers herein have a dispersibility of at least 50%, preferably at least 75% or even at least 95%, as measured by the method set out hereinbefore using a glass-filter with a maximum pore size of 50 microns; more preferably the polymer herein is a water-soluble polymer which has a

solubility of at least 50%, preferably at least 75% or even at least 95%, as measured by the method set out hereinbefore using a glass-filter with a maximum pore size of 20 microns.

5 The polymer can have any average molecular weight, preferably from about 1000 to 1,000,000, or even from 4000 to 250,000 or even from 10,000 to 200,000 or even from 20,000 to 75,000. Highly preferred may be polymeric material having a weight average molecular weight of from 30,000 to 70,000.

10 Depending on the required properties of the article herein, the polymeric material can be adjusted. For example, to reduce the solubility, polymers may be included in the material, which have high molecular weights typically above 50,000 or even above 100,000, and vice versa. For example, to change the solubility, polymers of varying level of hydrolyses may be used. For example, to improve (reduce) the elastic modulus, the

15 cross-linking of the polymers may be increased and/ or the molecular weight may be increased.

It may be preferred that the polymer used in the elastic article herein has a secondary function, for example a function in the composition wherein article is to be incorporated.

20 Thus for example for cleaning products, it is useful when the polymer in the polymeric material is a dye transfer inhibiting polymer, dispersant etc.

Preferred are polymers selected from polyvinyl alcohols and derivatives thereof, polyethylene glycols and derivatives thereof, polyvinyl pyrrolidone and derivatives thereof, cellulose ethers and derivatives thereof, and copolymers of these polymers with one another or with other monomers or oligomers. Most preferred are PVP (and derivatives thereof) and/ or PEG (and derivatives thereof) and most preferably PVA (and derivatives thereof) or mixtures of PVA with PEG and/ or PVP (or derivatives thereof). Most preferred may also be a polymeric material only comprising PVA.

Preferably, such polymers have a level of hydrolysis of at least 50%, more preferably at least 70% or even from 85% to 95%.



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are used, higher levels may be preferred, for example 2% to 15% by weight of the article or matrix.

# Active ingredient

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The active ingredient can be any material which is to be delivered to a liquid environment, or preferably an aqueous environment and preferably an ingredient which is active in an aqueous environment. For example, when used in cleaning compositions the article can contain any active cleaning ingredients. The articles may also comprise compositions, such as cleaning composition or personal care compositions.

10

In particular, it is beneficial to incorporate in the elastic article active ingredients which are moisture sensitive or react upon contact with moisture, or solid ingredients which have a limited impact robustness and tend to form dust during handling.

15

The active ingredient is typically a moisture sensitive ingredient, a temperature sensitive ingredient, an oxidizable ingredient, a volatile ingredient, or a combination thereof. The active ingredient may be biological viable material, hazardous or toxic material an agricultural ingredient such as an agrochemical, a pharmaceutical ingredient such as a medicine or drug, or a cleaning ingredient.

20

In particular preferred in elastic articles are active ingredients, such as enzymes, perfumes, bleaches, bleach activators, fabric cationic and/or silicone softeners and/or conditioners, antibacterial agents, effervescence sources, brighteners, photo-bleaches and mixtures thereof.

25

A preferred active ingredient is a perhydrate bleach, such as metal perborates, metal percarbonates, particularly the sodium salts. Also preferred active ingredients are organic peroxyacid bleach precursor or activator compound, preferred are alkyl percarboxylic precursor compounds of the imide type include the N-,N,N<sup>1</sup>N<sup>1</sup> tetra acetylated alkylene diamines wherein the alkylene group contains from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, particularly

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(which form the matrix), and a stabilising aid. Thus, to obtain an article in accord with the present invention, at least four different ingredients must be present in said article. It may be preferred to select essential ingredients which have dual functionality.

5 The above statements with regard to dual functionality ingredients are also true when considering highly preferred embodiments of the present invention, for example preferred articles comprising additional ingredients such as a dissolution aid.

10 The stabilising agent may be, or comprise, a foam matrix stabiliser. The stabilising agent may be, or comprise, an active ingredient stabiliser, especially an enzyme stabiliser.

Stabilising agents which are capable of stabilising the active ingredient indirectly by keeping the foam matrix of the article stable, herein referred to as "foam stabiliser" preferably comprise a surfactant such as a fatty alcohol, fatty acid, alkanolamide, amine  
15 oxide, or derivatives thereof, or combinations thereof. The foam stabiliser may comprise betaine, sulfobetaine, phosphine oxide, alkyl sulfoxide, derivatives thereof, or combinations thereof.

Other preferred foam stabilisers comprises one or more anions or cations such as mono-,  
20 di-, tri- valent, or other multivalent metal ions, preferred are salts of sodium, calcium, magnesium, potassium, aluminium, zinc, copper, nickel, cobalt, iron, manganese and silver, preferably having an anionic counterion which is a sulphate, carbonate, oxide, chloride, bromide, iodide, phosphate, borate, acetate, citrate, and nitrate, and combinations thereof.

25 The foam stabiliser may comprise finely divided particles, preferably finely divided particles having an average particle size of less than 10 micrometers, more preferably less than 1 micrometer, even more preferably less than 0.5 micrometers, or less than 0.1 micrometers. Preferred finely divided particles are aluminosilicates such as zeolite, silica,  
30 or electrolytes described hereinbefore being in the form of finely divided particles.





ammonium thiocyanates, polyols such as 1,3-butanediol, sugars, sugar alcohols, ureas, dibutyl or dimethyl phthalate, oxa monoacids, oxa diacids, diglycolic acids and other linear carboxylic acids with at least one ether group distributed along the chain thereof, water or mixtures thereof. These compounds do not form the foam matrix of the article herein.

5 Thus, these compounds are different to the plasticizer of the foam matrix.

Preferred stabilising agents that are capable of stabilising the active ingredient directly, especially if said active ingredient comprises one or more enzymes, are defined herein as "active stabilisers" or "enzyme stabilisers". Typically active stabilisers interact directly  
10 with, and stabilise, the active ingredient.

Typical active stabilisers for use herein preferably comprise a surfactant. Suitable surfactants for use herein are those described hereinbefore as surfactants suitable for use as matrix stabilisers. In addition to these surfactants, other surfactants suitable for use  
15 herein may comprise surfactants such as sodium alky(en)yl sulfonates, sodium alkoxysulfonates, preferred alkoxysulfonates are those comprising from 10 to 18 carbon atoms in any conformation, preferably linear, and having an average ethoxylation degree of from 1 to 7, preferably from 2 to 5.

20 Other preferred active stabilisers comprise boric acid, formic acid, acetic acid, and salts thereof. These acid salts preferably comprise counterions such as calcium and/or sodium.

Preferred active stabilisers comprise cations such as calcium and/or sodium. Preferably calcium chloride and/or sodium chloride.

25 Other preferred active stabilisers comprise small peptide chains averaging from 3 to 20, preferably from 3 to 10 amino acids, which interact with and stabilise the active ingredient, especially enzyme(s).

30 Other active stabilisers comprise small nucleic acid molecules, typically comprising from 3 to 300, preferably from 10 to 100 nucleotides. Typically nucleic acid molecules are

deoxyribonucleic acid and ribonucleic acid. The nucleic acid molecules may be in the form of a complex with other molecules such as proteins, or may form a complex with the active ingredient of the article herein, especially enzyme(s).

- 5 Active stabilisers suitable for use herein, especially when the article herein comprises a bleach, comprise anti-oxidants and/or reducing agents such as thiosulphate, methionine, urea, thiourea dioxide, guanidine hydrochloride, guanidine carbonate, guanidine sulfamate, monoethanolamine, diethanolamine, triethanolamine, amino acids such as glycine, sodium glutamate, proteins such as bovine serum albumin and casein, tert-
- 10 butylhydroxytoluene, 4-4,-butylidenebis (6-tert-butyl-3-methyl-phenol), 2,2'-butlidenebis (6-tert-butyl-4-methylphenol), (monostyrenated cresol, distyrenated cresol, monostyrenated phenol, distyrenated phenol, 1,1-bis (4-hydroxy-phenyl) cyclohexane, or derivatives thereof, or a combination thereof.
- 15 Other active stabilisers may comprise a reversible inhibitor of the active ingredient. Without wishing to be bound by theory, it is believe that a reversible inhibitor of the active ingredient, especially if the active ingredient comprises one or more enzymes, may form a complex with, and improve the stability of, said active ingredient, and thus, stabilises the active ingredient during storage. When the active ingredient is released,
- 20 typically into a liquid environment, the reversible inhibitor dissociates from the active ingredient and the active ingredient is then able to perform the desired action it is designed or intended to perform.

Active stabilisers suitable for use herein may comprise sugars, Typical sugars for use

25 herein include those selected from the group consisting of sucrose, glucose, fructose, raffinose, trehalose, lactose, maltose, derivatives thereof, and combinations thereof.

The active stabiliser may also comprise sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, mannitol, inositol, derivatives thereof, and combinations thereof.

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It may be preferred that the active stabiliser is in the form of a coating or barrier which at least partially encloses the article herein or the active ingredient thereof, preferably completely encloses the article herein or the active ingredient thereof, especially an enzyme.

5

The article herein may comprise (by weight) from 0.01%, or from 0.1%, or from 1%, or from 2%, or from 5%, or from 7%, or from 10%, or from 15%, or from 20% stabilising agent, and may comprise (by weight) to 70%, or to 60%, or to 50%, or to 40%, or to 30%, or to 25% stabilising agent. The amount of stabilising agent present in the article depends on the amount and type of the active ingredient and on the amount and type of the matrix herein.

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#### Additional Ingredients

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The component of the invention preferably comprises additional ingredients which can improve the dissolution properties of the article herein.

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Preferred additional ingredient which improve the dissolution of the article herein preferably comprise; a sulfonated compound such as C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alk(en)yl sulfonates, C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> aryl sulfonates, di iso butyl benzene sulphonate, toluene sulfonate, cumene sulfonate, xylene sulfonate, salts thereof such as sodium salts thereof, derivatives thereof, or combinations thereof, preferably di iso butyl benzene sulphonate, sodium toluene sulfonate, sodium cumene sulfonate, sodium xylene sulfonate, and combinations thereof; and/or a C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> alcohol such as methanol, ethanol, propanol such as iso-propanol, and derivatives thereof, and combinations thereof, preferably ethanol and/or iso-propanol; and/or a C<sub>4</sub>-C<sub>10</sub> diol such as hexanediol and/or cyclohexanediol, preferably 1,6-hexanediol and/or 1,4-cyclohexanedimethanol; and/or ingredients which are capable of acting as whicking agents, such as cellulosic based ingredients, especially modified cellulose; and/or swelling agents such as clays, preferred clays are smectite clays, especially dioctahedral or trioctahedral smectite clays, highly preferred clays are montmorillonite clay and hectorite clay, or other clays found in bentonite clay

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preferably done by feeding the mixture into a spray drying tower, preferably such that the mixture is fed through spray nozzles which form droplets of the mixture, and spray drying the droplets at conventional, resulting in granules of the elastic article.

- 5 The physical and/ or chemical introduction of gas or foaming, as mentioned above can be done by any known method, preferred are
  - physical foaming by gas injection (dry or aqueous route) optionally under mixing, high shear stirring (dry or aqueous route), gas dissolution and relaxation including critical gas diffusion (dry or aqueous route);
  - 10 - chemical foaming by in-situ gas formation (via chemical reaction of one or more ingredients, including formation of CO<sub>2</sub> by an effervescence system),
  - steam blowing, UV light radiation curing.

These foaming steps are preferably followed by a drying step or an additional drying step  
15 to remove excess liquid or part thereof, such as water. In particular, the drying step is at least done after the polymer matrix is formed, and optionally after the active ingredient is added, preferably as final step in the process. The drying step is done preferably such that the final elastic article is of about the same volume after the drying step as before the drying step. Thereto, the drying step is preferably done by freeze-drying, whereby the  
20 solvent, e.g. water, is removed under vacuum and reduced temperatures. Also useful can be slow fluid bed drying or oven drying at modestly increased temperatures, such as 40-80°C, or even 40-60°C .

Preferred processes involve at least the step of formation of a mixture of polymeric  
25 material and a liquid, preferably a solution of polymeric material and a solvent, preferably comprising water, and adding a plasticiser (or as the case may be, additional plasticiser) to this. If the presence of the active ingredient and/or the stabilising agent in the matrix is required, these are also added to the mixture of polymeric material solvent and plasticiser. Alternatively, or in addition, it may be preferred that the matrix is formed around the  
30 active material, preferably a core of the active material and carrier material.

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This is then further processed for example into bodies of the shape of the final article, for example particles or beads, and typically dried to obtain the articles. Preferably, a gas is added prior to the shaping step. Shaping steps include granulation steps such as atomisation or spray-drying, extrusion, micro pastillation. Freeze drying is a preferred process to dry the bodies to form the articles.

The following are preferred processes resulting in low dust or even nil dust particles, as measured with the stressed Heubach test described below, having a matrix with a Tg of below 10°C and an elastic modulus of below 0.5GNm<sup>-2</sup>, as indicated in more detail in the following specific examples.

A first preferred process is as follows:

The required amount of a solution of the polymer material (or a mixture of polymer and a liquid) is obtained, and for example (introduced) in a mix tank. Then the required amount of (a solution of) the active material, for example an enzyme solution, and stabilizing agent is added, and the required amount of plasticiser is added, and optionally other additional ingredients, such as fillers, densification agents etc. This is agitated to become a homogeneous mixture. Preferably, a gas such as air can be introduced into the solution, by any of the methods above, preferably physically, by high sheer mixing.

Then, particles are formed from this mixture by atomisation, preferably using a Positive Displacement pump to transfer the mixture solution to a spray nozzle (s), preferably using either single or multi-fluid nozzles to create liquid droplets.

The liquid droplets are then frozen, preferably by passing through a refrigeration media (can include liquid nitrogen, freon, refrigeration oils). Then, the frozen particles are transferred to a vacuum chamber, preferably having a temperature (as measured on the surface of the particles) below 0°C.

The frozen particles are preferably collected from the spray column and transferred without raising the temperature. The temperature of the walls and contact trays of the freeze dryer are preferably maintained below 0°C to keep the particles frozen.

A vacuum is applied, and the frozen ice crystals will sublime said gas to a gaseous





form, resulting in cells in the particle. The total drying degree can be controlled with the level of vacuum, and contact temperature of the chamber walls and trays.

After the particles have been dried to the desired moisture content, they will be free flowing. Then preferably, the particles can be classified via a variety of screens and or  
5 process equipment.

The optional step above, of introducing gas (bubbles) into the polymeric solution mixture has been found to give a much better impact resistance to the particle, reflected by its electric modules. The introduction of gas bubbles can be accomplished in a variety of  
10 ways.

In the atomisation step, the atomizing nozzle should preferably be located in a spray column with sufficient height to accomplish droplet freezing while gravity falling. The nozzle type can be of various designs - single fluid pressure nozzle, spinning insert, sonic,  
15 or multi-fluid nozzle. The important aspect is to disrupt the liquid stream to form discrete liquid droplets. As these droplets fall with gravity, they need to be cooled to freezing. The freezing media is preferably non-aqueous gas or liquid which can provide rapid freezing of the liquid droplets. The actual temperatures for cooling these droplets to form particles, is preferably below 0°C and preferably below -20°C.

It may also be preferred that the above process is modified as follows:  
a gas, preferably CO<sub>2</sub> gas, is introduced in the mixture and the mixture is introduced in a spray drying tower, as above, thereby forming spray-dried foamed particles, which can be classified if necessary. Preferably the inlet temperature in the tower is about 130°C and  
25 the outlet temperature about 75°C and the spray rate is 12.5g/min. For example a Niro Mobil Minor with two fluid nozzles can be used hereby. The resulting particle may be already of the required form, or may be submitted to further freeze drying under vacuum.

Another preferred process is as follows:

The required amount of a solution of the polymer material is obtained (or alternatively, a powdered polymer can be used provided a liquid is added) and for example introduced in  
30

a mix tank. Then the required amount of plasticiser is added, and optionally other additional ingredients, such as fillers, densification agents etc. This is agitated to become a homogeneous mixture. Preferably, a gas such as air can be introduced into the solution, by any of the methods above, preferably physically, by high sheer mixing.

5

Also, particles comprising the active ingredient, such as an enzyme, and the stabilising agent, and optionally other ingredients, such as fillers or carriers are prepared, for example by fluid bed coating, by charging first 'cores' (typically when the actives care enzymes, these core particles are sugar or starch particles), to a fluid bed and spraying the active material or a solution of the active material onto these cores and then drying any solvent such as water from the active solution off with warm fluidizing air.

10

Then, the polymeric mixture above is introduced onto these active/cores , for example via a positive displacement pump leading to an atomizing nozzle inside the fluid bed as described above. More than one nozzle can be used and it may be preferred that different ingredients are added to the core via different nozzles.

15

The fluidizing air needs is preferably below 0°C, preferably around -20°C. Then, the fluidizing air freezes the polymeric mixture/solution onto the outside of the active-core. This is a critical parameter to control and typically the air temperature must be below 0°C in order to quickly freeze the polymeric mixture/solution onto the core particles.

5

Then preferably, the frozen particles thus obtained are transferred to a vacuum chamber, as above, and also classification may take place.

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This technology results in particle of the invention comprising a matrix around the active ingredient.

The optional step above, of introducing gas (bubbles) into the polymeric solution mixture has been found to give a much better impact resistance to the particle, reflected by its Young's Modulus.

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Another preferred process is as follows:

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The required amount of a solution of the polymer material (or solid polymer and a suitable amount of liquid) is obtained, and for example introduced in a mix tank. Then the required amount of (a solution of) the active material, for example an enzyme solution, and a stabilising agent (a solution of) is added (into the mix tank) and the required amount of plasticiser is added, and optionally other additional ingredients, such as fillers, densification agents. This is agitated to become a homogeneous mixture. Preferably, a gas such as air can be introduced into the solution, by any of the methods above, preferably physically, by high sheer mixing.

25

Then, the polymeric solution is pumped from the mix tank into an extruder or into a cavity with a die plate at the end. Before entering the extruder or cavity, gas can be injected into the mixture and for example be dispersed via a mechanical shear mixer or a static mixer.

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As the extrudate exits the die plate, the change in pressure creates a slight puffing or swelling in the extrudate. The extrudate is then cut to the correct length with either a die face cutter or with some other device (e.g. heated wire, rotating plug cutter, etc.). The

extrudates can optionally go through additional rounding steps to become more spherical. Process equipment that can accomplish this function include (rotating pans, agglomeration pans, marumerizers, tumbling drums, mixing drums, etc.).

- 5 For example, a paste is prepared by mixing 75g PVOH, 15g Citric acid, 2g PEO and 22.5g glycerol in a Braun mixer, high sheer, namely set at full speed for 40seconds: then 80g H<sub>2</sub>O and 80g enzyme was added and mixed at high sheer, namely set at full speed until a smooth foam had formed, approximately within 2mins. The foam was extruded from a 10ml syringe onto a plastic sheet. This was left for 24 hours to dry. Once dry the
- 10 foam strips were cut into approximately 1 - 2mm sections to form particles of the formula (dry) 63.2 polyvinyl alcohol, 19% glycerol, 12.7% citric acid, 1.6% PEO, 4% water, 3.2% enzyme.

The resulting particles had an elastic modulus of 0.00016GN.m<sup>-2</sup>.

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The resulting particles give 0% dusting when tested in a stressed Heubach test, which indicated a very good impact robustness. (The stressed Heubach test is performed as known in the art, using equipment as supplied by Heubach Engineering GmbH, Germany, with the stressed modification of the rotation speed of the impeller being 75 ±

20 1 rpm and the balls being of Tungsten carbide and 82 grams each.).

Preferred moulding / pastillisation process:

A highly preferred process involves shaping particles of mixtures as described above by use of a mould; whereby mixtures as described herein are introduced in a mould and subsequently dried (freeze dried). Also preferred is such a process which uses pastille making equipment, whereby mixtures as described above, preferably comprising also  
 5 introduced gas, are forced through a rotating perforated drum onto a moving conveyor belt, shaping into pastilles (droplets or particles). When dry or hardened, the thus formed particles or beads are removed from the conveyor belt by a scraper.

Preferably, the first step is to make a mixture of polymeric material and plasticiser, a  
 10 liquid component, and optionally the active ingredient. Preferably, gas is introduced into this mixture as described herein. This must preferably be free from large undissolved particles which may block up the perforations in the drum. The mixture is preferably in the temperature range 0-50°C. The mixture is pumped into a manifold that enters the rotating perforated drum and is parallel to the longitudinal axis of the drum. The mixture  
 15 is pumped into the inner of the drum and, as the drum rotates, is brought into contact with an internal scraper bladed lying in contact and along the length of the inner surface of the perforated drum, parallel to the feed manifold.

The distance of the outside surface of the perforated drum is within the height of the  
 20 desired particle height (which is less than the diameter of the perforations) but not touching a moving conveyor belt or a rotating smooth surfaced drum at the point where the internal scraper is in contact with the inner surface of the perforated drum, the tangential speed of the perforated drum matched by the speed of the conveyor belt or the tangential speed of the smooth surfaced drum. As the mixture is forced through the  
 25 perforations, which are typically in the size range 300 - 2000µm (but may be smaller or larger), it is deposited onto the surface below. The rotation of the perforated drum shears the feed material away from the material on the smooth surface thus leaving a droplet, or pastille, which will form the required particle. These pastilles can be set by either chilling or by evaporation of some or all of the solvent fluid. If chilling is required the  
 30 temperature of the conveyor belt or smooth surfaced drum may be in the range of from ambient to -20°C. If evaporation of a solvent is required, then this can be achieved by heat conduction from the conveyor belt which may be in the range ambient to 70°C, by

drying air (which may be heated up to 200°C to reduce drying time) passing over the surface of the pastilles, or both.

Then, the resulting particles are removed from the drum or conveyor belt by a scraper. This removal process may be improved by the use of a suitable lubricant (release agent)

5 on the drum, such as silicone oil. This lubricant or release agent may show an added benefit to the particle by reducing adhesive properties between the polymeric mixture and the belt/drum and thus increasing the pastille height, if this is a desirable feature.

### Examples

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#### Example 1

#### A process of preparing an elastic article in accord with the present invention

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4700g of a 33%w/w solution of polyvinyl alcohol (weight average M.W being from 30,000 to 70,000) is mixed with 3360g enzyme solution (5% by weight active enzyme and 85% by weight water), 159.3g of glycerol and 168g of ammonium sulphate in a high shear mixer until a smooth foam is formed. This mixture is transferred into a feed tank, and using a gear pump, it is pumped into micropastillisation equipment, for example as supplied by Sandvik Process Systems, Totowa New York, using a perforated drum with perforations of 1mm diameter, spaced 2.5mm apart. The apparatus deposits pastilles onto a smooth surfaced drum coated with a film of silicone oil and heated to ~30°C. When one quarter of the drum is covered by pastilles, the drum is stopped from rotating. The pastilles are dried using a hot air heater until the surfaces of the pastilles are dry to the touch. The resulting particles are then scraped off and collected.

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#### Example 2

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#### A process of making foamed articles of the invention, in the form of tablets, beads or particles

Apparatus: Microbalance, graduated 100ml flask, Kenwood "Chef" food processor with provided whisk and mixing bowl, glass or plastic moulds, spatula.

Chemicals: Poly (vinyl alcohol) (Aldrich chemicals, molecular weight Mw= 30-70k), Glycerol (99 %, Aldrich chemicals), Citric Acid (Aldrich, Citric Acid, USP Anhydrous),  
5 distilled water, dry ice (or solid phase CO<sub>2</sub>), thermally insulated box.

Procedure

1. Weigh  $50 \pm 0.2$  grams of PVA,  $30 \pm 0.2$  grams of glycerol.
2. Mix the PVA and glycerol using the mixer set a low speed (mark 2; low sheer).
3. Add  $50 \pm 1$  ml of water gradually to the dry mix maintaining the mechanical mix for 2  
10 minutes. A smooth gel should be obtained.
4. Increase the mix speed high sheer to the maximum setting (mark 8). Add 10-20 ml of water until a PVA foam is forming. Maintain high shear mixing for 3 minutes.
5. The active ingredients, for example from 2-10 gram of enzyme, are progressively added to the foam under a maintained mechanical mixing so that a uniform active  
15 foam is obtained.
6. Stop mixing. Spread the PVA foam in moulds avoiding any collapsing of the structure.
7. Place the filled moulds in a thermally insulated box 1/3 filled with dry ice. Leave to freeze for 5 hours.
8. Quickly place frozen samples in a vacuum freeze-dryer (Edward XX) for 24 hours.
- 20 9. Remove dried sample from moulds.

Any active ingredient can be added in step 5, at any level, normally up to about 50 grams, for example fabric softeners, bleaching species, nonionic surfactants.

- 25 Any stabilising agent can be added in step 5, at any level, normally up to about 50 grams, for example, bovine serum albumin, ammonium sulphate, sucrose and monostyrenated phenol.

Example 3

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A process of making elastic articles of the invention, in the form of tablets, beads or particles

Apparatus: as described in the above example

- 5 Chemicals: Poly (vinyl alcohol) (Aldrich chemicals, molecular weight  $M_w = 30-70k$ ), Glycerol (99 %, Aldrich chemicals), Citric Acid (Aldrich, Citric Acid, USP Anhydrous), Sodium carbonate (Aldrich, Anhydrous), Dodecyl Sulphate surfactant (Aldrich), distilled water, Petri dish (diameter 90 mm), Oven (set at  $45^\circ\text{C} \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ )

Process:

- 10 1. Weigh  $50 \pm 0.2$  grams of PVA,  $30 \pm 0.2$  grams of glycerol,  $20 \pm 0.2$  grams of sodium carbonate, and  $2 \pm 0.2$  grams of sodium dodecyl sulphate.
2. Mix the PVA, glycerol and sodium dodecyl sulphate using the mixer set a low speed (mark 2).
3. Add  $50 \pm 1$  ml of water gradually to the dry mix maintaining the mechanical mix for 2
- 15 minutes. A smooth gel should be obtained.
4. Add the active ingredient, for example 5 gram enzyme, and sodium carbonate and mix vigorously for 30 second until a fully expanded foam is obtained
5. Spread the foam in petri dish in a uniform 1cm thick layer
6. Place petri dish in  $40^\circ\text{C}$  oven for 24 hours.
- 20 7. Remove the dried foam film from mould.

Any active ingredient can be added in step 4, at any level, normally up to about 50 grams, for example fabric softeners, bleaching species, nonionic surfactants.

- 25 This was repeated by using 55wt% polycarboxylic acid polymer, 20wt% anhydrous sodium carbonate and 25wt% enzyme, softening clay etc.; and repeated by using 45wt% polycarboxylic acid polymer, 15wt% polyethylene glycol, 20wt% anhydrous sodium carbonate and 20wt% enzyme, softening clay etc.



# Claims

1. An elastic article comprising;  
a) an active ingredient; and  
5 b) a foam matrix formed from at least one polymeric material and a plasticiser; and  
c) a stabilising agent;  
whereby said article is capable of delivering said active ingredient to a liquid  
environment.
- 10 2. An elastic article according to claim 1, whereby said active ingredient is active in an  
aqueous environment, and whereby said article is water-dispersible, water-disintegrating  
or water-soluble, preferably water-soluble.
- 15 3. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said matrix has a glass  
transition temperature (Tg) of below 50°C, preferably below 40°C, and optionally  
between -20°C and 20°C, preferably between -10°C and 10°C.
- 20 4. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said matrix has an elastic  
modulus of less than 1 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, preferably less than 0.1 GN.m<sup>-2</sup>, or even less than 0.01  
GN.m<sup>-2</sup>.
5. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said stabilising agent  
comprises a foam stabilising agent.
- 25 6. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said active ingredient is a  
cleaning product ingredient, fabric care ingredient, pharmaceutical ingredient or cosmetic  
ingredient, preferably selected from enzymes, surfactants, brighteners, dyes, suds  
suppressers, bleaches, bleach activators, fabric softeners, fabric conditioners, antibacterial  
agents, effervescence systems and mixtures thereof.

7. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said active ingredient comprises at least an enzyme, and whereby said stabilising agent comprises an enzyme stabilising agent, preferably said stabilising agent is an enzyme stabilising agent.

5 8. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said polymeric material comprises a water-soluble polymer, preferably a water-soluble polyvinyl alcohol.

9. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, which is in the form of a particle having a volume mean particle size of from 50 to 4000 microns, preferably from 100 to  
10 1500 microns.

10. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, which has a relative density of from 0.05 to 0.9, preferably from 0.3 to 0.7.

15 11. An elastic article according to any preceding claim, whereby said matrix forms a series of closed and open cells, whereby the number ratio of closed cells to open cells is preferably at least 1:1.

12. An elastic article according to claim 7, obtainable by a process comprising the steps  
20 of;

a) obtaining a mixture of a polymeric material and a plasticiser, preferably water and another plasticiser; and

b) chemically or physically introducing a gas in said mixture; and

c) prior to step b) and/or simultaneous with step b) and /or subsequent to step b),

25 contacting an active ingredient to said mixture; and

d) prior to step c) and/or simultaneous with step c) and /or subsequent to step c),

contacting a stabilising agent to said mixture; and

e) shaping the articles of the resulting mixture;

whereby preferably one or more steps a) to e) are followed or accompanied by the

30 removal of part of the water, if present.

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13. An elastic article according to claim 12, whereby said active ingredient is contacted to said stabilising agent prior to said active ingredient being contacted to said mixture of polymeric material and plasticiser.

5 14. Use of an elastic article according to any of claims 1 to 14 to deliver active ingredients to an aqueous environment, preferably the active ingredients being detergent active ingredients, preferably enzymes, and the aqueous environment being the wash water.

10 15. Use of an elastic article according to any of claims 1 to 14 in cleaning compositions, fabric care compositions, personal care compositions, cosmetic compositions or pharmaceutical compositions, preferably to incorporate therein active ingredients selected from enzymes, perfumes, surfactants, brighteners, dyes, suds suppressers, bleaches, bleach activators, fabric softeners, antibacterial agents, effervescing systems, and  
15 mixtures thereof.

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(54) Title: **ELASTIC ARTICLE**

(57) Abstract: An elastic article is provided which comprises a foam matrix formed from a polymeric material and a plasticiser, a stabilising agent and an active ingredient, such as a detergent active ingredient, typically to be delivered to an aqueous environment. Said elastic article provides a means to deliver an active ingredient to an aqueous environment, preferably the active ingredients being a detergent active ingredient, preferably enzymes, and the aqueous environment being the wash water.

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In the U.S. National Phase Entry  
Under 35 USC 371 from  
International Application of  
MCGOFF, Matthew Grady et al.  
Int'l. Application No. PCT/US00/27300  
Filed in the RO/US on 04 October 2000  
Entitled: Elastic Article

ASSOCIATE POWER OF ATTORNEY

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Dear Sir:

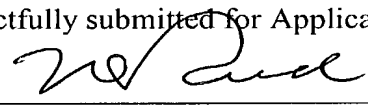
You are requested to recognize all attorneys/agents associated with the customer number listed below as Associate Attorneys for The Procter & Gamble Company with authority to prosecute this application, to make alterations and amendments therein, and to transact all business in the Patent Office connected with the application or with the patent granted thereupon.

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Respectfully submitted for Applicants,

By



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## DECLARATION COMBINED WITH POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

"Elastic Article"

bearing the above listed Procter & Gamble Company Case number, the specification of which was filed as PCT/US00/27300, designating at least the United States of America, with the United States Receiving Office on 04 October 2000.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37 Code of Federal Regulations §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35 United States Code §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or of any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or Inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

## PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATION(S) TO WHICH WE CLAIM PRIORITY:

9923344.7	GB	05 October 1999
9923393.4	GB	05 October 1999
0010599.9	GB	03 May 2000
0022529.2	GB	13 September 2000

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35 United States Code §120 of any United States application(s) or PCT international application(s) designating the United States of America that is/are listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35 United States Code §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37 Code of Federal Regulations §1.56 which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

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I hereby appoint the following as my attorney(s) or agent(s) with full power of substitution to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark office connected therewith:

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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